

used to swarm on one or two selected aphid-rich trees. One or at the most two days were taken by the birds, which was dependent on the fruit numbers to finish up the majority of the fruits. These fruits from which the sweet honey dew had been removed had fallen to the ground at the base of the tree. Then, though a few birds lingered on the same tree, most of them shifted to nearby trees. Later, due to the scarcity of fresh young fruits (and consequently honey dew), and due to full blooming of *Salmalia malabarica*, *Erythrina indica* etc., the birds turned to these trees.

Though it is reported that various flower buds form part of the regular diet of the rosefinch (Ali and Ripley 1974), they were never observed taking flower buds of *H. integrifolia*. Because of the large number of aphids, the birds got "aphid cluster" on their beak-commissures and were seen to clean their beaks by rubbing them on the stem after feeding on one or two fruits. It is however quite possible that the aphids might have been swallowed along with the secretion.

While making observations, some points arose which remain unresolved. These are:

1. The only other bird visiting the fruits apart from finches were some warblers which made occasional visits more for aphids than for the honey dew. The common rivals of the rosefinch for flower nectar such as drongos,

mynas, crows etc., which compete for the nectar kept away from this sweet honey dew. Considering this, it is possible that *Carpodacus erythrinus* might have chosen this peculiar food to avoid competition.

2. Though *Carpodacus erythrinus* serves as an agent in cross pollination when it visits flowers for nectar (Ali 1932), such chances are completely excluded here as:
 - i) Flowers are pollinated by wind (anemophilous).
 - ii) Birds visit the tree only after the flowering is almost over and fruits are formed on which the exudate is present.
3. Feeding by the rosefinch can be disadvantageous to the tree if it causes premature fall of the fruits.

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February 5, 1996 NAYAN V. KHANOLKAR
'Pitrusmruti', Near R.B.J. Colony,
Shastri Nagar, Dombivli (W), Dist. Thane.

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26. ON THE SYSTEMATIC POSITION OF THE SPECIES *POLYPEDATES PLEUROSTICTUS* (AMPHIBIA: RHACOPHORIDAE)

The 47 species of Indian tree frogs of the family Rhacophoridae are accommodated in three genera viz., *Philautus* (32 species), *Polypedates*

(3 species) and *Rhacophorus* (12 species). While studying the amphibians of southern Western Ghats, (Ravichandran, 1992), I had the opportunity to

examine and describe 11 species of *Philautus*, 2 species of *Polypedates* and 3 species of *Rhacophorus*. Study of five species, viz. *Polypedates cruciger* Blyth, *P. maculatus* (Gray), *Rhacophorus lateralis* Boulenger, *R. malabaricus* Jerdon and *R. pleurostictus* Gunther described under the last 2 genera revealed that *pleurostictus* shows closer affinities to species of the genus *Polypedates* than to those of *Rhacophorus*. Hence the generic differences are enumerated and the status of *pleurostictus* is discussed here.

The genus *Polypedates* Tschudi, 1838 was erected to accommodate moderate to large tree frogs, characterized among other features by smooth shagreened skin, the skin of the skull being co-ossified either to frontoparietals, nasal or squamosal bones in many species, dermal ornamentations generally being absent, and with fingers usually webbed only at the base, whereas *Rhacophorus* Kuhl and Van Hasselt, 1822 included species with slender body and narrow waist, with the skin of head never co-ossified to the skull, dermal ornamentation usually present and the fingers and toes fully webbed. The species *pleurostictus* is characterised by a broad and smooth body, fingers with rudiments of web at base, absence of dermal folds on forearm and tarsus, all diagnostic features of the genus *Polypedates*.

The generic status of this species has been debated. It was assigned to genus *Polypedates*. Later Boulenger (1882) who differentiated the two genera *Rhacophorus* and *Polypedates* on the basis of the extent of the interdigital web, and others like Inger and Dutta (1986), Daniel and Sekar (1989) included it under the genus *Rhacophorus*.

On the basis of a detailed study of the relative development of the interdigital webbing, presence or absence of dermal folds on forearm and tarsus, size of tympanum and general coloration of *Polypedates* and *Rhacophorus* dealt with under five species viz., *Polypedates cruciger*, *P. maculatus*, *Rhacophorus lateralis*, *R. malabaricus* and *R. pleurostictus* it is felt that *pleurostictus* shows closer affinities to *cruciger* and *maculatus* belonging to the former genus to which it is now transferred as originally done by Gunther, thereby retaining only *malabaricus* and *lateralis* under *Rhacophorus*. This view agrees with the characteristics of the two genera drawn by Lien (1970) on the basis of the study of osteology, morphology and coloration, though he did not suggest the generic transfer.

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M.S. RAVICHANDRAN
Zoological Survey of India,
Southern Regional Station,
100, Santhome High Road,
Chennai-600 028,
Tamil Nadu.

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